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THE *Persian* PRINCESS:

OR, THE ROYAL VILLAIN.

A TRAGEDY.

As it was Acted at the

THEATRE-ROYAL in *Drury-lane.*

By Mr. THEOBALD.

——*Tanta est Discordia Fratrum* Ovid.

LONDON: Printed for *Jonas Browne*, at the *Black Swan* without *Temple-Bar*, 1717.

BRITISH MUSEUM

To Her GRACE.

MARY

Dutchess of ORMOND.

MADAM,

I Have many times confess'd, in private Conversation, that it was no small Condescention in Your Grace to admit this trifling Essay of a youthful Genius to appear in the World under Your Protection: And I desire this publick Address may Witness for Me, that my Sentiments are not yet alter'd.

I am at a stand to determine whether my Presumption was greater in attempting the hardy Task of Tragedy at my Years; or, when attempted, in thinking it worthy of Your Grace's View: But I declare my self free from that proud Thought; Your Grace's Goodness had encourag'd me to make an humble Offering: You did me the Honour of sending for me into Your Presence, on account of a few Verses I had wrote on a Subject highly pleasing to Your Grace;

which was, on your Noble Lord's Recovery from a dangerous Illneſs.

I wiſh I may have a Theme almoſt as Happy to expreſs my Gratitude and Reſpect; I mean, that of his Grace's Reſtoration to Offices of Honour, equal to his high Birth and Virtues. Such great Merit cannot be always miſunderſtood, however 'tis the Intereſt of thoſe who envy its Luſtre, to ſtrive to keep it clouded and unknown. I almoſt dare Propheſie this pleaſing Revolution; and am ſure the Majority of the Kingdom will ſhew their Joy on his Return to Power.

But pardon this Digreſſion, *Madam*; and permit me, with the greateſt Submiſſion, to confeſs my ſelf,

May it pleaſe your GRACE,

Your GRACE's *moſt Devoted,*

Moſt Obedient, and

Moſt Humble Servant,

L. THEOBALD.

THE

THE PREFACE.

I Thought my ſelf under a Neceſſity of a few Lines by way of Preface, becauſe it may be wonder'd at by ſome, that I ſhould now expoſe this Piece to the Town, which I have ſuffer'd to lye above ſix Years in a ſafe Obſcurity ſince its Appearance on the Stage; Not that I mean to enter into many Apologies for its Defects; for however Partiality might prevail, I am not totally blind to its Errors. I can with much Sincerity accuſe it in Ovid's *Words,*

Dum relego, ſcripſiſſe pudet; quia plurima cerno.
Me quoq; qui feci Judice, digna lini.

bluſh at the Weakneſs of many Paſſages, and think

think that a thorough Blot might have done them most Justice. But now I have made this frank Confession, I am sensible I may be assaulted with these Objections; Why would you then trust it to the Press? or if obstinately determin'd to publish, why not first give it a correcting Hand? To the first, I reply, Repeated Importunities have wrung it from me; and to the latter, I am so deeply engag'd in the Translation of Works of more moment, that I had no Time to throw away in Amendments.

It was writ, and acted, before I was full Nineteen Years Old; and I expect that Age shall stand as a Plea for many Errors with the candid Reader. It cannot be imagin'd I cou'd then write to establish a Reputation; and if I ever again employ my Pen for the Theatre, I hope this shall stand as a Foil to any such future Production.

I will not give my self the Trouble of its Defence; if my Book seller find his Accompt, I shall harbour little Pain; only hope, that the Condemnation I in Modesty have given it, shall be deem'd more my Praise, than the Poem's Discredit: and rather invite the Reader to a Perusal, than if I had put on a Supercilious Air of Merit, or promis'd Mountains of Art and Ingenuity.

PRO-

PROLOGUE.

TO one and All our Author ſends to Day,
Who with their Preſence honour this his Play,
And ſays,——but firſt, he bad me humbly Bow,
As would-be Members at Elections do,
Thank for one Vote, and for another ſue.
Too well he knows your Expectations join,
To look for Sterling in each labour'd Line;
But he pretends to no ſuch Payment now,
Whatever he another Year may do;
And who can tell,
To what a Pitch he may his Genius raiſe,
Wing'd by your Favour, and acquitting Praiſe?
Tho' he can boaſt of nothing here to pleaſe,
Unleſs your Smiles ſtamp Worth upon the Piece;
Nor think to ſtand the Teſt, but with a Pit
Reſolv'd to lay aſide all carping Wit:
Thus he declares, and hopes his Suit to win;
For when pack'd Juries give their Verdict in,
The Bribe, not Cauſe, abſolves the trembling Sinner:
So, let your Pity ſpare our young Beginner.
'Tis his firſt Fault, and let him plead his Age
T'arreſt his Doom, and mitigate your Rage;
Beſides our Author, being proſtrate here,
And crying Quarter, ſhould no Danger fear:
He quits Deſert, and on no Treaty ſtands,
But throws himſelf and Scenes into your Hands;
And if you give them Welcome, he will ſay,
Your Mercy, not his Merit, ſav'd the Play.

Dramatis Perſonæ.

MEN.

King of Perſia.	*Mr.* Huſbands.
Memnon, *his Uncle.*	*Mr.* Keen.
Artaban, *Prince Royal of* Armenia.	*Mr.* Wilks.
Oxartes, *his Friend,*	*Mr.* Mills.
Mirvan, *younger Brother of* Artaban, *but revolted to the* Perſians.	*Mr.* Booth.
Barzanes *his Creature.*	*Mr.* Corey.
High-Prieſt of the Sun.	*Mr.* Smith.
Cleander.	*Mr.* Birkhead.

WOMEN.

Ameſtris, *Siſter to the King.*	*Mrs.* Bradſhaw.
Ardelia, *her Confident.*	*Mrs.* Cox.

Officers, Slaves, Guards, &c.

THE

THE *Persian* PRINCESS; OR, THE ROYAL VILLAIN.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, *Antichamber in the Palace.*

Enter Memnon, *Mirvan, and High-Priest of the Sun.*

Attend her Sports beyond the setting Sun?

Mirv. Auspicious Vice[roy]

Still grows in Strength

Like foulking *Scythians*,

Nor dares to fix a Court throughout the Earth

A Stranger, and an Exile ev'ry where?

But yet, howe'er

In Choice; and led as now

With an amusing Frown,

Which riſe in ev'ry Breaſt from *Perſia*'s Triumphs:
Think on the glorious Havock of the Day;
And let the gaudy Scene inſpire your Virtue
To welcome Conqueſt.——

Memn. Rather, let me think
On all the Dangers we have undergone,
And bleſs thoſe Pow'rs, by whom we were preſerv'd!
Thoſe Pow'rs, that chang'd the Iſſue of the Day:
Making our Foes Confederates in their Ruin.
While our young King, the Life of all our Hopes,
Spurr'd on his Courſer in the Liſts of Death,
Where the Fight hotteſt rag'd, He was unhors'd;
When at that Inſtant a brave unknown Foe
Broke thro' the Preſs, and with his gen'rous Arm
Prevented th' horrid Stroke, prepar'd to fall
Upon the Head of Majeſty oppreſs'd! ——

Mirv. It was an Act of Wonder, and of Praiſe:
And tho', whene'er *Armenia* comes acroſs my Thoughts,
A Curſe attends it; May your hoſtile Swords
Pierce thro' its utmoſt Limits, lay it waſte,
Raze all its Palaces, conſume its Stores,
And bring the Plough upon its fenced Cities!
Yet I could ſmother all my Wrongs; forgive
This hated Country for ſo brave an Action.
I long, yet dread to know the happy Man
That did, what Pride and Envy wiſh undone! [*Aſide.*

H. Prieſt. Had *Mars* appointed you for his Relief,
You might have doubly claim'd our Princeſs's Love;
For her own Freedom, and her Brother's Life:
Attractive Charms to break her Virgin Coyneſs,
And give her up to crown your high Deſert.

Mirv. Sooth not my Madneſs with the fond Conceit
Of Virgin Coyneſs:——By the Sun's bright Beams
I ſwear, 'tis inſolent Perverſeneſs in her;
The ſaucy Pride of Woman's Affectation
To return Scorn for Courtſhip!—— When our Arms
Had made her aged Father and her ſelf
Pris'ners to our *Armenian* State, I thought
A Victor's Power might awe her to Compliance;
Yet then ſhe haughtily diſdain'd my Suite,
And to my Face avow'd,——(O Plague to think,
And Hell to utter!)——my Brother had her Heart.

H. Prieſt. Women are blind to Merit; obſtinate
In Choice; and led at random by their Wills;
Still fond of Contradiction!——

Mirv. ——No my Prieſt;
For tho' they ſearch not Virtues in the Soul,
Yet they are caught with Glory's dazzling Bait.
My Rival had the Rights of Elderſhip;
Immediate Heir to wide *Armenia*'s Empire;
Him, Him ſhe ſaw the curſt obſequious Croud
(Neglectful of my Father's Years,) adore:
And bask their Vileneſs in his riſing Beams.
Tho' I confeſs, in ſpite of ſtubborn Hate,
And, as his Foe, I grudge the Praiſe I give him;
Yet Nature form'd him worthy of a Throne:
With Courage, Juſtice, Eloquence, Compaſſion,
And all the Virtues which indulgent Heav'n
Could grant a Prince to bleſs his People's Hopes.

Memn. How reliſh'd our Old King your ſev'ral Suites?
Pris'ns, and the keen Reſentments for his Loſs
Of Liberty and Empire, made him ſure
Look on you both with Eyes of Enmity,
And heighten'd Scorn.——

Mirv. ——Quite contrary, my Lord;
He was not heard to breathe one murm'ring Accent
During his Chains; but calm, as if his Hate
Were ſunk in an Extream of Piety,
And Shackles were the eaſy Bands of Friendſhip.
By Fate, or Chance, he favour'd my Pretenſions;
And urg'd, in vain, his Daughter to obey him.
This partial Choice ſoon got a Tongue at Court,
And *Artaban*'s Diſgrace was loudly talk'd of;
Our Father, jealous of his Darling's Honour,
Took on himſelf the Vengeance of his Son;
And, 'ſpite of conſtant Interceſſions made,
Pronounc'd the Good, the Royal Captive's Doom.

Memn. O mighty Brother!----Moſt unhappy Prince!
How did our *Perſia* ſtagger in thy Death?

Mirv. That Scene of Blood for ever baniſh'd me
Th' *Armenian* Court: I fled the barb'rous Soil;
And tho' intreated, nay commanded back,
I ſtill remain'd an Exile; 'till at laſt
Proclaim'd a publick Traytor to the State,
And, ſtung with that Indignity, I left
My Country's conqu'ring Arms to ſuccour *Perſia*.

Enter Barzanes.

I left my Miſtreſs too;——The cruel Fair one,
To her admir'd, ſucceſsful *Artaban*.

Barz. With Him be all your Pangs of Rival Love
Forgot; Report, that fain would be believ'd,

Agrees, this mournful Day's declining Sun
Saw *Artaban*'s Eclipſe,
Mirv. ——Triumph my Heart,
And all my Spirits dance to that glad Sound!
While my pleas'd Senſes whiſper to my Soul,
Thy Rival, hated *Artaban*'s no more! ——
Oh, 'tis a Theme to ſatisfy Revenge,
And injur'd Love attone: But ſay, my Friend,
My beſt *Barzanes*, teach me how he fell.
Barz. When he perceiv'd his laſt Reſerve of Men
Too few to conquer, He, intent on Death,
Survey'd a while, where nobleſt he might fall.
Then, furious, ruſh'd amidſt his yielding Foes;
And, as he were the Miniſter of Fate,
Where-e'er he turn'd, Deſtruction mark'd his Way;
'Till ——
Mirv. ----Death! ---- Be ſilent, Slave; I bad you not
Deſcant upon his Fate; but, by the Pride
That ſwells my Breaſt, I would have giv'n this Hand
To've heard, he had a flying Stab of Shame
Upon his Back; and bit the Ground in Anguiſh!
H. Prieſt. Ceaſe, mighty Sir; your Anger grows too loud:
The Trumpet's Sound proclaims the Triumph near,
And ſee, the King; ——
Enter King, attended with Commanders, who range themſelves on each Side of the Stage; bowing low, as the King ſpeaks.
King. At length, my Friends, the dire Deciſion's o'er;
Diſcord and War, by our victorious Fury
Whip'd back, are ſlunk into their native Hell;
Turn all our Battle-Axes, Swords, and Spears,
To Scythes and Plough-Shares; or let's hang them up,
As uſeleſs Trophies, to our Houſhold Gods;
The ruſty Prey of long corroding Peace.
Memn. Accept the Tribute of your humble Slave,
That kneels with Joy to kiſs your ſacred Robe;
And counts the greateſt Bleſſing of his Years,
At once, to ſee your Safety and Succeſs.
King. Riſe, my good Uncle; Welcome to this Breaſt;
Be always preſent here, with ſober Counſels
Reſtrain the Raſhneſs of your head-ſtrong King,
And guide his Youth with Reaſon---Pardon, Prince,
[*To* Mirvan.
That you thus long have unregarded ſtood,
The Source of all our Joy! To you we owe
Thoſe Heaps of Slain, that, cov'ring o'er the Field,
Muſt gorge our Kites and Vultures! Common Fame

Speaks

Speaks ſuch Heroick Executions of you,
As even ſtrike our Admiration dumb.
Mirv. My Lord, I court not popular Applauſe;
But ſcorn the Praiſe, when from ſo baſe a Tongue:
The many headed Monſter weighs not Merit;
But deals the ſhuffled Prize, with raſh Deſign,
As publick Hate or private Intereſt ſways 'em.
I fought not on the common ſervile Score
To conquer Kingdoms, or erect new Thrones;
A more ſublime Ambition fir'd my Soul,
Love wing'd my Arm, and got the ſtart of Fortune! ——
King. By my bright Race of Royal Anceſtors,
Love has a Champion worthy of its Cauſe;
And who deſerves to reap its beſt Rewards.
To ſuch high Worth all Recompence is vile,
Or all but Her, for whom you fought and conquer'd.
Mirv. What Luſtre or what Pride can Conqueſt boaſt.
When ſhe, in whom all Triumph is compriz'd,
Abſconds; and grudges her indulgent Beams
On publick Pomp?—An empty Pegeantry,
Thus unadorn'd with her illuſtrious Preſence!
King. This Night ſhe has obtain'd, in cloſe Receſs,
Converſing with the Gods——
Some idle Zeal of ſhort continuance,
Or haſty Vow, yet unfulfill'd, that hangs
Upon her Woman's Conſcience: In the Morn
This holy Man ſhall preach her into Love,
And give her up, reſign'd to your Embraces.
H. Prieſt. Moſt glorious Sir, th' Infernal Pow'rs exact
The Tribute you by ſolemn Oath declar'd
To pay their Deities, the War once done;
A Hecatomb of Slaves.
King. Be all thoſe Wretches, (whom th' Event of War
Has doom'd a Sacrifice, t' appeaſe the Ghoſt
Of my Great murther'd Father;) brought before us:
That if Lord *Mirvan* have a Friend amongſt 'em,
He may eſcape the Rigour of his Fate;
The reſt conduct to th' Altar——

[*A Train of Priſoners in Chains guarded, are drawn in File, acroſs the Stage; Artuban laſt.*

Mirv. Death to my Hopes! —By all my Hate, 'tis he;
Perdition ſeize him! Whirlwinds ſnatch him hence,
And rid me of that Face, which gives me Torrures!
King to Memn. Who's he, whoſe dazling Garb and auguſt Port
Attract all Eyes? on whom the croud of Slaves
Gaze with Concern, nor heed their own Diſtreſs?
I would be taught his Name, and Quality——

Mirv. Like a Mute Victim muſt he bleed, unknown?
Where then is my Revenge? —— Or, if I ſhould
Diſcloſe him to the King, who knows th' Event?
But Royal Pity, and his Siſter's Pray'rs,
May bribe ſome gen'rous Start of fickle Temper
To pardon; and ſo diſappoint my Hate! ——

[Artaban *advancing from among the Priſoners.*

Art. How long muſt we retain this ſervile Being,
To wait the Victor's Sentence? We are arm'd
Againſt the worſt of Fate, and ſcorn alike
Your Mercy, or your Malice. Death's the Prize
We wiſh to draw, now Liberty is gone!
Theſe Chains revenge you of the Man, has made
Your Soldiers tremble and your Subjects fly;
Behold the Scourge of *Perſia*, *Artaban* ——

Mirv. Proud forging Slave, thou ly'ſt; for *Artaban*
Was ſeen to fall; and thou, to die more nobly,
Would'ſt Imp his Shape, and arrogate his Fame.

Art. Too well thou know'ſt this Face, diſſembling *Mirvan*;
Thou Traytor to thy Father, Gods, and Country!
I envy not the ſhort-liv'd Pomp you've gain'd,
The Hire of Treaſon and the Troops you ſold.
Better be thus —— in Honour's vanquiſh'd Cauſe,
Than that inglorious Pageantry of Falſhood!
Thou wert my Brother, and I will not curſe thee,
But my ſuperior Virtue ſpurns thee off;
The Stain and Dregs of Royalty prophan'd!

Mirv. The Loſers have a Privilege to rail,
But I'm to learn this Woman's wrangling War;
Which, wert thou Free and durſt aſſert in Arms,
My Sword ſhould anſwer thee ——

Art. Take back that Falſhood;
Were I in Arms, thou would'ſt as ſoon contend
With angry *Jove*; or ſtand the falling Shock
Of riving Thunderbolts, as meet my Rage.
I hunted thee, thro' all th' embattled Plain;
Shook off the Crouds, that preſs'd to meet their Fates,
Beneath this Arm, and only wiſh'd for thee:
That Fortune would have ſet us Face to Face,
Where I might fairly 've charg'd thee with thy Crimes;
Thy Father's, and thy Country's Truſt betray'd,
And ſunk thee with thy Shame —— But ſtill thy Fear
Out-ran my lame Revenge in the Purſuit!

King. 'Tis Inſolence in Captives thus to talk ——

Memn. Yet you, that boaſt ſuch fierce demeanor now,
Are conſcious of one Act, viler than Fear;

—— For

(For he that ſuffers Crimes, is guilty of 'em;)
I mean, the captive King of *Perſia*'s Death;
Againſt the Law of Arms and Nations murther'd:
Murther'd for you! —— Now let your Conſcience anſwer,
What Marial Worth, what Trophies can efface
So rank a Stain to Honour?

Art. —— Hear me, Stateſman;
If thou, unknowing, lay'ſt it to my Charge,
That I conſented to that Monarch's Fate;
Thou haſt a Soul black as that Deed of Raſhneſs:
Black as thoſe Arts deviſing Politicians
Uſe, to ſubvert the Innocence, they want!
I hope not to be ſpar'd for this Confeſſion,
No threats of Death, or Tortures, could have forc'd;
But, as a Soldier, I would clear my Fame.
And, like the Sun, ſet in an Orb of Glory.

King. Enjoy the fancy'd Glories of your Fate;
Guards, drag him to his Doom ——

Art. —— Ay, glut your Hate;
Let my Blood ſtream to quench your thirſty Souls
Till ev'ry Vein be empty.
But know, inſulting Prince! whom this Day's Chance
Has made th' Aſcendant of my trampled Fortune;
Had not this abject Slave, you now condemn,
Sav'd you from Death, and blunted Slaughter's Edge,
You had not liv'd to know your Arms have conquer'd!

[*Going with the Guards.*

King. Soldiers, come back, —— By Heav'n, I am o'er-whelm'd
With Shame, and Wonder! Let me view that Face,
Whoſe Features now confirm my doubting Thoughts,
And ſhew me my Preſerver: O forgive,
Thou gen'rous Man, the Raſhneſs of my Rage;
And to my Ignorance impute your Sentence:
Behold, with open Arms I meet your Virtues;
And, for a Life reſtor'd, embrace your Friendſhip.

Mirv. Death to my Hopes! ——

Art. —— Yet hold, miſtaken Prince;
For I muſt ſpeak what Honour bids me ſay:
Think not, that *Artaban*'s own rugged Breaſt
Counſel'd his Arm t' arreſt th' impending Stroke;
And ſave his *Perſian* Foe to make a Friend of.
No; —— but the Princeſs, e're the Fight began,
Adjur'd me, by the tender Love I bore her,
By all my Hopes of Victory and Her,
To ſave her Brother, and decline his Sword.
Oh! my *Amiſtris*, ——

What a Reward has partial Fortune giv'n
For my Obedience, and unconquer'd Faith?
Merv. Demand your premis'd Victims, holy Sir.
H. Prieſt. My Lord, 'tis in the God's behalf I ſpeak;
For our Nocturnal Altars all are rais'd,
For the Performance of your vow'd Revenge.
King. Peace, greedy Prieſt,----and tell your churliſh Gods,
No ſanguine Steam ſhall feed their famiſh'd Noſtrils
Till *Perſia*'s Monarch pleaſes.---All the Court
This Night ſhall ſhine with gay luxurious Pleaſure;
Nor Blood prophane the ſacred Feſtival.
Back to their Priſons with the Crew of Slaves;
But for Prince *Artaban*, take off his Chains;
And let a Guard at diſtance wait his Pleaſure;
Tho' ſternly he declines our proffer'd Love,
The Princeſs till to Morrow ſhall reprieve him
To grace her Nuptials.---Forward, to the Temple.
[*Exeunt omnes, præter* Mirv. Artab. *and Guards.*
Art. Ha! Grace her Nuptials? O my tortur'd Soul!
Stay, cruel Prince, and take your Gift again.
For Life will be my Curſe:---I dare not live.---
Let me be rack'd, impal'd, or have my Fleſh
Torn from the ſtarting Bones, I'll ſuffer all,
Nor groan beneath my Doom.---But he is gone;---
And I afflict my ſelf with idle Rage,
That ſpends it ſelf on Air: as angry Waves
Swell up at Rocks, and daſh themſelves to pieces.
Mirv. Brother;---
Art. ---Away.---
Mirv. ---But hear: The riſing Morn
Reſigns the Princeſs to my longing Arms;
Then, if a Smile from her will eaſe your Pains,
She ſhall have leave to ſhew you Grace.---Farewel.
[*Exit* Mirvan.
Art. Brav'd by this Stripling!---who, not two Years ſince,
Ere this reverſe of Fate, would fawn and cringe;
Paying his Worſhip jointly to the Sun
And Me, without diſtinction of Reſpect.
So ſpecious a Sincerity, as made
It Sin to doubt! But thou, my good *Oxantes*,
(Whom this Day's Fray has ſever'd from thy Friend,)
Didſt point his Falſhood out thro' its Diſguiſe.
But thou art loſt!---And my *Ameſtris* too!
My Princeſs:---O Deſtruction, Death and Horror!
Torn from my Arms yet in our Bridal Sheets!
Why was I born, ye Gods, with ſuch a Fate?

So over-charg'd with mighty Bliss at first,
Then in a total Deprivation curst!

[*Exit guarded.*

The End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE *a Gallery in the Castle.*

Enter High Priest, follow'd by Mirvan. [*Thunder.*

Mirv. I Tell you, Priest, you must, and ought, resent it;
The Sacriledge is plain; your Gods are robb'd:
And angry Heav'n, in Prodigies, declares
It self impatient of unfinish'd Vows.
Else, why this dreadful, and unnatural Wreck
Of the vex'd Elements to fright Mankind?
The Thunder rouls not with its wonted Terrors,
But seems to burst yon Azure Roof asunder;
And rends our Earth with its Convulsive Ecchoes.
As if the Gyants were again at War;
Or *Jove* had Sworn to cancel erring Nature
For being Disobedient. Horror reigns,
Joyn'd with Confusion, like the Dawn of *Chaos*!

H. Priest. The People swarm, like Troops of Summer Bees,
Arm'd with Domestick Weapons; full of Outrage,
And wild Tumultuous Murmurs;——To the King——
Is all the Outcry of the Factious Herd:
Force him to yield us those Devoted Slaves
For instant Sacrifice, and to appease
The wrathful Pow'rs.——

Mirv. If *Mirvan*'s humble Judgment may be heard,
The King assumes too far; looks on made Vows,
As Words of haste; as he were Arbitrator;
And could from Destiny, at Will, resume 'em.
What can we better hope, but this Contempt
Of *Mithra*'s Godhead in his Injur'd Priest,

Will soon unmask Religion to the Vulgar,
And make it despicable? Sacrifice
Will be no more; the Altar's Flames extinguish'd,
And Temples Solitary!

H. Priest. By the bright God, the Patron of our Empire,
Your words have pierc'd my Soul with that unerring
Semblance of Reason, I already feel
What we most fear——The Sanctitude of Faith
Debas'd, and all its Venerable Honours
Familiar to the Croud? O mighty Pow'rs,
Assert your sinking Worship, and avenge
Your own Preheminence disown'd, insulted!

Mirv. Back to the Temple, and intreat the King
The Slaves may dye to satisfie the People.
I must attend a while to see the Princess;
That Visit o'r, I will my self return,
And second your Request:——Make not delays.——

[*Exit* H. Priest.

I know, the King is obstinately bent,
And will refuse him;——Well, as I could wish;——
The Priest, that smothers his Resentments now,
Again deny'd, no doubt will vent 'em to me;
And while his Rage is up, I cannot want
An Instrument to work with: But with Zeal
Will varnish o'er Ambition, and escape
The odium that attends on open Mischief.
But see, she comes; Grief on her lovely Aspect
Hangs, like a Cloud upon the Mornings Brow;
And shines with Lustre borrow'd from her Beauties.
I will retire; perhaps may learn the Cause.

[Mirv. *retires.*

Enter Amestris *and* Ardelia.

Amest. Why do'st thou love infectious Misery,
And hug the Ruins of thy mournful Mistress?
Go, my *Ardelia*, to some sprightly Court;
Enjoy the Charms with which Heav'n Crowns your Youth,
And waste not Beauty in destructive Anguish.
Thou hast no Cause for Sorrow;——I must mourn;
Each future Day must witness to my Tears.
And silent Night start at my waking Groans.
For ne'er will Slumbers close these streaming Eyes,
Till Death, in pity, seal 'em up for ever!——

Ard. Have Comfort, Madam.

Amest.——Can'st thou be so cruel
To mock my Tears, and make my Grief thy Sport?

What

What Comfort can I have, who have no Hope?
But, like some shipwreck'd Wretch, encompass'd round
With threat'ning Seas, stand shiv'ring on the Ridge
Of a bleak Rock, that peeps above the Flood;
And look, and wish in vain to be reliev'd;
But can behold no Rescue from my Fears,
While the curl'd Billows foam with horrid Discord,
Mount with hoarse Rage, and climb against the Rock,
As each tumultuous Wave were at a Strife
To dash me off, and plunge me in the Deep.

Ard. Cease to indulge this Canker to your Ease,
And, striving, overcome it: Care and Sorrow
Give Ground apace at sight of Pomp and Pleasure;
But fed with Solitary Resignation,
Get to fantastick Heights: and dress'd in Horrors,
In seeming Horrors, turn the Soul to Madness.

Ames. O! for a Cure like that of all my Pains;
Madness were decent Pomp my Birth might claim,
To mark my Sorrows from ignobler Grief.
But stubborn Reason will not be depos'd;
Like Conscience, setting all my Plagues to view:
Yet, oh! *Ardelia*, if thou would'st be kind,
Go to the Prison Grates; and from the Slaves
Learn, if it may be, by whose curs'd Hand
Prince *Artaban* was slain, and how he fell.

Ard. I will inform my self with utmost Care,
And hasten to attend you. [*Exit* Ardelia.

Ames. ——What a weight
Of unacquainted Sorrow loads my Breast!
Captivity was kind; and gave me Joy,
Then when it wounded deepest; Liberty,
Dire Change of State! has robb'd me of all Comfort.
[Mirvan *comes forward.*

Mirv. In Tears! Ye Gods, what ill presumptuous Cause
Makes Sorrow thus intrude on Princely Beauty?
Waste not, bright Excellence, those precious Drops;
More worth, than the Distilling fragrant Gums
That make our *India* rich!—— When Princes weep
The Heav'ns are shook as when the Thund'rer nods;
And tott'ring Earth seems sliding off its Props.
Each Element, in fatal League combin'd,
Put Nature to th' Expence of Prodigies;
And all comply with you to be disorder'd.

Ames. This Flattery, my Lord, as ill becomes you
As your Intrusion on my private Hours;

If your Deserts have bought my Brother's Favour,
Is my Disquiet to repay your Service?
Mirv. Do I offend, thus kneeling at your Feet?
Is it Intrusion thus to breathe my Vows,
Or Insolence to say, how well I love?
Ameſt. What! Love from thee? O do not name it, *Mirvan*;
Revenge, Ambition, Treason, Death, and Slaughter,
Would better grace thy Speech;——There was a Man,
(Heav'n pardon, that I live to say, there was!)
Braver in War, than Stories boſt of Heroes;
True to his Friend, his Country, and his Gods;
In Mercy gentle as the falling Snow
That wets unfelt, moſt ſtrict in Honour's Laws;
But when he lov'd,——Ye Gods, how he ador'd!
And as the Penitent with awful Fear
Bows at the Shrine, and ſighs, and melts in Tears;
So *Artaban*——
Mirv. Damnation ſeize the Fiend!
And when he dies,——
Ameſt. ——Thou know'ſt that he is Dead:
Curſt be the Tongue, that triumphs o'er his Fate;
But doubly curſt the Cauſe that ſever'd him
And me!——Thou mighty Goddeſs, that preſid'ſt
O'er Nuptial Vows, ſtoop from thy Seat of Bliſs;
And in th' Unalterable Scroll of Fate,
Let this my Wiſh be regiſtred againſt me.
Show'r all thy fierceſt Indignation down
On this devoted Head; devouring Earth
Gape and intomb me quick, if I conſent
On any Terms to yield this Wedded Hand
To any ſecond Lord.
Mirv. ——Ha! Wedded!——When?
How, and to whom!
Ameſt. ——To Godlike *Artaban*.
Mirv. Furies!——In time recant,
And to the liſt'ning Winds pronounce it falſe,
Or by this Hand, th' unerring Inſtrumene
Of my Revenge, he dies——
Ameſt. ——Sooth not my Breaſt
With a falſe Joy; O could'ſt thou vouch it true,
That *Artaban*'s alive; I would adore
Thy Virtue; think thee Fair, as new-born Light;
Stile thy Ambition an aſpiring Heat
Of Matter in thy Soul allied to Heav'n;
Bleach all thy Crimes, and think them Virtues all.
But tell me, does he live? Is't poſſible?

Yet

Yet do not, for my boding Heart has answer'd,
And says, it cannot be:——Th' unhallow'd Furies
Borrow'd the Loom of Fate, and fond of Slaughter,
With heedless Havock have undone the World.
Had I too dy'd, then I had been most happy;
'Tis Liberty to dye, when Life's uneasie;
'Tis a Retreat from Pain, and those dire Thoughts
That drag the working Soul thro' Realms of Torture.

Mirv. Why weeps my Fair? Be kind, and cease your Tears:

Enter Artaban *behind.*

O let that Sigh dispel the sullen Storm;
Chase each rude Care, and bring you back to Gladness.

Artab. See, see, ye Gods, how frail are Women's Hearts!
The Sex is all Delusion:

Mirv. ——Do not strive
To pluck away your Hand; it must, it shall
Be mine; and I to Death will prize the Treasure. [*Thunder.*

Amest. Hark! let me go; Barbarian, let me go;
And talk no more of Love; least Earth should gape;
And, thinking I consented to the Theme,
Th' assisting Thunder call to plunge me deep
Grov'ling and guilty to th' Infernal Shades:
No more to view my Lord, my *Artaban*——

[*He comes forward.*

Shield me, ye Pow'rs, and guard my frighted Soul;
What art thou, that assum'st that pleasing Form,
And, stealing on the Night, invad'st my Eyes
With Sights too exquisite for humane Sense:
My Brain grows sick, and Objects dance before me.

Swoons, he catches her.

Artab. Ha! Heav'n, she falls!——

Mirv. ——Confusion! Where's the Guard?
How got he Entrance here? Deceitful Traitors!

Artab. O! Life again those Lids that rob the World
Of its best Light thus clos'd in seeming Death:
The frighted Roses from your Cheeks are fled,
That seated there, and intermix'd with Lillies,
Are wont t' illuminate the lovely Plain
With Tinctures, bright as those of rising Morn!
Still art thou cold? I'll force thy fleeting Soul
Back to its Seat, and warm thee to new Life.
She comes——and Beauty reassumes its Throne,
The sprightly Charms mount up into her Face;
And play, like *Cupids*, round their Mother Goddess.

Amest. Am I awake? Or only dream of Joys?
Do I indeed possess thee once again?
Oh! we must never be divided more.

Mirv.

Mirv. Tortures, and Hell! I will not bear all this;
The King's betray'd; his treach'rous Guards are brib'd;
But I ſhall ſtop the Growth of further Treaſons.
[*Draws his Sword.*
Unhand me, Madam;----
Ameſt. ----Not while theſe weak Hands
Have pow'r to hold; theſe Eyes and Tongue to beg;
But I will claſp your Knees, and draw you back,
Till you on Me have turn'd your Anger firſt;
On Me, the Cauſe of this your Enmity.
Mirv. Then thus, I'll force my way; and end at once
The great Diſpute:----This, to thy Heart.
[*Puſhes at* Artab. *he draws a Dagger from his Boſom; after a ſhort Diſpute wounds* Mirv. *in the Hand: his Sword drops.*
Ameſt. O, for ſome Help:----
Artab. ----Come on;----I am prepar'd,
And thus return th' Aſſault.
Mirv ----Curſt Accident!
Perdition rot this weak unſinew'd Arm.
But reſt aſſur'd, there ſoon will come a time,
Shall finiſh this imperfect Quarrel.—— [*Exit* Mirv.
Ameſt. Are you not hurt, my Lord? Alas! you bleed.
Art. 'Tis but a Scratch; the Villain meant it home;
And put his utmoſt Strength upon the Thruſt:
But in this Cauſe for my *Ameſtris* fought,
(O think me not a vain and idle Boaſter;)
Had *Hercules* himſelf attack'd my Life;
I could with Eaſe have warded all his Strokes,
As I did *Mirvan*'s.——See to whom we ſtand
Indebted, that we once again have met.
Re-enters Ardelia.
Ameſt. *Ardelia*'s ever kind; and, if I live,
Such Recompence as poor *Ameſtris* can
Beſtow ſhe may Command.
Ard. ——You over-rate
My little Services, and make me bluſh;
Whate'er I can, my Duty will enjoin.
And pardon, Sir, your Servant's tender Fears;
In my Return, (what Terror ſeiz'd my Heart!)
I met Lord *Mirvan*, fierce and fiery red,
Who paſſing cry'd aloud, Double the Guards,——
Treaſon will ſpread apace, unleſs ſurpris'd,
The King's not ſafe while *Artaban*'s alive.——
Ameſt. Save me, my Lord, and hide me from my Fears;
A thouſand Fancies croud into my Breaſt,

Moſt

Moſt hideous all, all ominous to thee!
Mirvan has Pow'r; commands my Brother's Ear,
And bends his Will; we muſt expect a Storm,
When ſo much Malice, like a thick'ning Cloud,
Threatens to pour a Deluge on our Heads.
Art. Dangers are only ſo, to guilty Fear:
But Fate, or Fortune cannot work to move
Th' undaunted Soul, with Innocence ſecur'd:
Ameſt. O fly, my Lord, yet while 'tis in your Pow'r;
Security betrays us to the Snare,
And, like a Thief, firſt trains us from the Road,
Then ſpoils us of our Wealth. O think, my Lord,
How the ſtrong Leopard ſhoots at once with Rage,
And ſeizes its unwary ſimple Prey.
So eaſie does Oppreſſion gain its Ends
On open and unguarded Innocence.
Art. O drive me not to Shame with ſtrong Perſwaſion;
For Reſolution melts in Beauty's Fires:
You drive my Reaſon from its ſtrongeſt Holds,
And make it fly before inſulting Love.
The buſie Sp'rits that cluſter round my Heart,
To Reaſon's Laws their Fealty diſavow;
And all ſubmit themſelves to Love and you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to the Temple of the Sun.*

The King ſeated under a Canopy, Memnon, *High Prieſt, and Officers.*

Memn. Urge it no more; you ſee the King's diſturb'd;
Pleaſe, holy Sir, to give his Paſſion way.
King. Talk not to Me of Prodigies and Omens;
By the bright Chariot of yon Sun we worſhip,
Tho' the fierce Bolts ſhould cruſh this pond'rous Roof
Upon my Head, I would in Death perſiſt;
And tell the Gods, the Victims ſhall not die:——
I'm not to learn the Artifice of Prieſt-hood;
That Heav'ns a Plea; and when you want the Spoils
Of offer'd Slaves, and find your Gains with-held,
Then Heav'n's incens'd at Sacrifice delay'd.
H. Prieſt. Yet, Sir;——
King. ——No more.
H. Prieſt. ——Your Pardon; I muſt ſpeak:——
This will not quell the Croud.

King.

King. —Ha! what? the Croud!
Perdition ſeize thoſe Engines of thy Will,
Who gaze with Admiration of thy Virtue,
And ſpecious Piety; and thus amus'd,
See not the muffled Vices of thy Soul.
I will go face theſe buſie bluſt'ring Slaves;
And let 'em know that I am King in *Perſia*;
And not a Prieſt, the Idol of their Worſhip!
Follow me, Sirs. [*Exeunt King, Memn. and Officers.*

Manet High Prieſt ſolus.

H. Prieſt. Great *Mithra!* If thou be'ſt a God of Pow'r,
If thoſe magnifick Attributes we give thee,
Are not intirely Titular and Vain,
Let not thy violated Servant kneel,
And beg Revenge unheard: ——

Enter Mirvan.

Mirv. —'Tis as I gueſs'd. [*Aſide.*
Who nam'd Revenge? —— Up, venerable Sir,
Truſt not the Gods; Revenge muſt be our own;
And when they have inſpir'd a gen'rous Rage
Into our Breaſts, they Will that we ſhould act
As Paſſion dictates.

H. Prieſt. —See, my Lord, alas!
You bleed. What hardy Villain durſt attempt
Your Princely Perſon?

Mirv. —How the Coward ſhakes!
What can we leſs expect than Wounds and Inſults,
When Slaves are licens'd to commit all Outrage,
And ſpurn at their Superiours? ——

H. Prieſt. How, my Lord?
The Slaves are all ſecur'd, if Chains and Dungeons
Can keep 'em faſt.

Mirv. —I grant you, Sir, they are
In groſs; but *Artaban*, the Maſter-Slave,
Walks unconfin'd, unſhackled, ſhould I ſay
Unarm'd, this Blood would witneſs to the Falſehood.

H. Prieſt. O! why was I bred up to muſty Books,
From early Childhood, to digeſt the Rules
Which contradict my Senſe. When I am wrong'd,
In vain's the Cure of Patience, preach'd Indurance,
And dull Content! Reſentment fires my Soul;
And I could wiſh I knew to wield a Sword,
To purchaſe Vengeance for my Friend and ſelf. ——

Mirv. Peace, Sir; and let us whiſper our Conſults,
In Place of more aſſured Secrecy;

Nor

Nor talk of Swords; for Violence is vain;
An open Vengeance loses all its Ends;
And, like a Mole, industrious to be slain,
Works up its Folly outward to the World.
Force too's Obnoxious to unsteady Fortune;
But close Designs unguarded leave the Foe,
If there we fail, th' opprobrious Overthrow
To awkard and imperfect Arts we owe.

[*Exeunt.*

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Night SCENE *of a thick Grove.*

Enter Oxartes *in a Priest's Habit.*

IF Error cheat me not in these blind Tracts,
'Tis here Lord *Mirvan*, by confirm'd Report,
Soon as the Night-Bell tolls the Hour of Twelve,
Passes alone, repairing to the *Magi*:
Black Fiends, that people this Infernal Grove;
And by dire Contract with the *Stygian* Gods,
From stalking Ghosts extort th' uncertain Knowledge
Of hid Futurity:——This Gown and Beard
Make a Disguise too nice for Night and *Mirvan*
To see me thro', unless my Speech betray me:
Which if it do, this Dagger knows his Part.
The Clock has struck; and yonder is a Light;
Now Fortune, be my Guide, 'tis thee I follow.

[*Enters the Grove.*

Enter Mirvan *from the Grove.*

Mirv. The Sp'rits that see into the latent Seeds
Of Time, and know th' unripe Event of things,
Have giv'n me firm Assurance of Success.

These

These were their Words; ——
" Fortune is ever lavish to the Brave,
" Strike home, and be assur'd Success to have;
" Nor fear Repulse, 'till Slaves their Fetters break,
" And their Demands in Arms and Terror speak.
——Impossible! But to prevent that Fear,
The Slaves shall die; ——My Rival too shall die!
(For he's already safe, by my Command!)
Yes, *Artaban*, I will be yet reveng'd:
Nor shalt thou long expect what Fate attends thee.

Re-enter Oxartes *to him.*

Oxart. At length I've track'd him out; Now, all kind Pow'rs
Help me, to work him to my honest Purpose.
Mirv. Th' High-Priest ere this has giv'n the potent Draught,
And his offended Gods are now appeas'd;
If a King's Death attone for common Victims.——
'Tis time I leave these Groves; the King once dead,
Then, *Mirvan*, is thy Hour to grasp at Empire! *Going.*
Oxart. What Words of horrid Meaning does he muster?
Lord *Mirvan*.——
Mirv. Ha! What hollow Voice was that?
Or did my Fancy, penetrating Sense,
Create this Noise to start me from my Cares?
But something does approach!---What art thou, speak?---
Oxart. I am as thou art; an *Armenian* born,
By Custom grown a *Persian*; fore'd by Wrongs,
(Whose bare Remembrance fires my thinking Soul;)
To quit my Native Soil; An Enemy
Profess'd to *Artaban*, and his Adherents;
Mirv. Talk'st thou of Wrongs, which *Mirvan* can redress?
What would'st thou have with me, and wherefore sought me
At this dead Hour, this Inauspicious Season?
Oxart. Night answers well the Purpose of my Heart;
I would, Revenge; Revenge on *Artaban*!
Deep in my Breast, I wear the Characters
Of Injuries receiv'd; not worn and film'd
By length of Time, but fresh as bleeding Sores,
You too have known the smart of an Abuse;
Despis'd, and elbow'd out of Dignity
By him, by *Artaban*; yet can forgive
The small Disgrace, and think your self unhurt!
Mirv. Plagues, Pestilences blast me, if I do;
My Hate to him, were both our Bodies burnt
On the same Pile, the *Theban* Story would
Renew; and seperating Flames ascend.

In

In distant Columns!—— But a sure Revenge
Salutes us, with the Dawn of early Day;
Already has the Sentence reach'd his Ear,
Or quickly will;——

Oxart. ——Ha! must he die so soon? [*Aside.*

Mirv. You start; and stand aghast; as if the News
Had froze your Passion with a cold Repentance;
And struck you speechless.

Oxart. ——I shall lose my self,
And all the means to save him!——[*Aside.*] No, you wrong me;
But I am griev'd to think, there is a Train
Will ruin yours, the King's, and my Revenge.
And therefore sought I you.

Mirv. ——Unfold this Wonder;
What mean you?——

Oxart. ——Not to cheat you with a Lye;
Or pawn my Truth to buy your easie Faith!
(You juster Pow'rs, forgive me, that I'm false!)
Here is a Dagger; take it, if you doubt me;
And whenso'er you think my story stain'd
With Falsheed's Die; plunge it into my Throat,
And so prevent the growth of a Deceit.

Mirv. No more of that; Distrust is incident
To Cowards and ignoble Minds alone:
Speak on, and I believe——

Oxart. ——Then mark me well.
Oxartes, having reap'd the Fate of Battel,
(A Youth, whom *Artaban* hath ever lov'd,
And next to Heav'n, above Mankind preferr'd;)
Hath brought six hundred Men; who round the City,
Mix'd in the Tumult of the gen'ral Triumph,
Walk unobserv'd: These, in Detested League,
Have bound themselves, yet ere the rising Day,
To fire the Prison; or with Sword in Hand,
When their lov'd *Artaban*'s led out to Death,
To force the Guard, and bear him off in Triumph.

Mirv. Damnation! how the subtle Poison steals,
And wars within my Veins, and stings my Heart!
O! for some Politicians abler Brain
To change this Scene of Death, and turn the Scale
Of Mischief on the curst Contriver's Head!——

Oxart. I thank you Gods, it takes as I could wish: [*Aside.*

To win your Friendship, and secure my Vengeance,
My self will run this bold, and desp'rate Hazard;
Bast their Designs, or perish in th' Attempt.

Mirv. What Prospect of Success dawns on thy Hopes?
Can'st thou, with single Arm, withstand a Torrent
And marr the Purpose of conspiring Numbers?
Let not thy thirst of Vengeance fool thy Reason.——

Oxart. Attend, my Lord, to my Advice; you say
The Prince's Doom is fix'd, and Sentence given:
Then give it out, That Death all Quarrels ends;
And as you wish his Soul should part in Peace,
Appoint some rev'rend Father to discourse him,
To preach Forgiveness of your mutual Wrongs,
And an Exchange of Pardon, ere he dies:
Be that my Province:——Who, as I shall soothe
His gen'rous Mind, and press th' engaging Duty,
Will watch a time to drench my Poniard deep,
And suck his vital Blood!——That when *Oxartes*
Comes to enlarge his Body from the Prison,
He may, in horrid Disappointment, find
The Prince has from his Body freed his Soul:
So will the Dagger, left, with ease, perswade 'em.——

Mirv. Thou Master-piece of exquisite Revenge,
Grow to my Heart!——But Time o'ertakes our Talk,
And will not brook Delays; this Signet take;
An undisputed Warrant for Admittance:
And when you have atchiev'd the great Exploit,
Expect me in the *Castle-yard*. Farewel;
And Fate succeed you. *Exit* Mirv.

Oxart. ——Rather bid farewel
To your fond Hopes!——Shine all auspicious Stars,
And shed assisting Influences down;
And you blest Pow'rs, that govern this our Earth,
Let me but save the best of your Creation;
Then if my Friendship, in the Means, have done
Ought that must stand for Criminal above;
Accept my Life, the Forfeit of my Falshood!—— *Exit* Oxartes.

SCENE *changes to a Prison.*

Artaban *discover'd, lying in Chains asleep;* Amestris *stands weeping by him.*

Amest. Good Heav'ns! Is this the great Reward of Virtue?
This gloomy Cell, recluse from Day, and Light,

But what one melancholy Taper yields,
That, aw'd with Damps ſcarce holds its feeble Fires.
And yet He ſleeps!——Sleeps, as his Breaſt were calm,
And could out-brave Ill Fortune with Content;
Henceforth deſpair not, Wretches, of Relief,
To ſoften Sorrows, and oppreſſing Anguiſh;
Since Injuries, like his, can find Repoſe!——

Art. waking.] What Sounds, more ſweet than Muſick, reach'd my Ear?
What means my Fate? Is it not my *Ameſtris*?
My Life! my Soul! O let me claſp thee, Love,
In theſe fond Arms, 'till I expire with Tranſports!——

[*Going to embrace her, ſtops.*

Pardon, this kind Exceſs of ſudden Joy!
Made me forget I was, the Wretch I am.
Theſe rugged Chains with lighteſt Touch wou'd wound,
And harrow up thy Softneſs:——O *Ameſtris!*
Why are thy Virtues link'd to theſe Misfortunes?

Ameſt. What ſays my Lord? Call not my Love in Queſtion:
By the kind Gods that gave me to your Arms,
Might I but here have leave to dwell with thee,
I would prefer the dark and diſmal Manſion
To Courts, to Pomp, to Gaiety, and Pleaſure.

Art. O thou art all Perfection, Truth, and Fondneſs.
Come to my Boſom, thou celeſtial Fair,
And breathe a Heav'n of Comfort to my Soul:
Their Irons have loſt their Weight, whilſt thou art here;
This Dungeon's Gloom but repreſents the Night,
The gentle Hours of Love, and chaſt Enjoyment.

Ameſt. O talk not of Enjoyment, but the Grave;
My buſie Thoughts, flutt'ring in ſearch of Joy,
Do flag, o'ercharg'd with damp and dewy Sorrow:
And find themſelves inclos'd with faſt Deſpair.
Yet ere a while Death will perhaps o'er-take us,
(For I have ſworn, I will not live behind you,)
And we ſhall be no more.——

Art. —— Be calm, my Love;
Nor wound my Soul with ſuch affrighting Kindneſs:
For thou ſhalt live; forget thy hapleſs Lord;
Reſume Content, and only die to Sorrow.
So, Sir, how wears the Night?

Enter Officer.

Officer. —— Too faſt, my Lord.

Artab. Thou bear'ſt a Meſſage in thy Eyes, my Friend,
Which thy too cautious Tongue fears to pronounce:
Speak on, I am prepar'd;——

Officer.

Officer. —— Forgive me, Prince,
Who come th' unwilling Herald of your Doom:
The rising Day must see a setting Sun! ——
Art. Then is One Morn of Comfort still behind;
As welcome to my Soul, as a kind Spring
That treads upon a rig'rous Winter's Heels.
Weep not, *Ameſtris*, nor unman my Heart;
Death's dreadful only in an idle Fear,
That ſtartles Cowards: I have met him oft,
And chas'd the griſley Phantom in the Field;
Who now purſues, and with ignoble Force
Inſults me, pinion'd: ——
Ameſt. Oh! *Artaban!* my Lord, we muſt not part.
The hideous Thought diſtracts my fright'ned Soul;
And mighty Sorrow, like a boiſt'rous Sea,
Breaks in upon my poor unguarded Breaſt:
Which ſtrives in vain to ſtem the raging Tide.
My Spirits ſhrink, and all the Woman yields.
O, hold me up; and claſp me to your Boſom;
There hide me from the dire reflecting Image
Of all my Thoughts, and Fear of —— O! to Morrow ——
Art. Why do'ſt thou preſs me with ſuch eager Fondneſs,
And make me wiſh this Being were prolong'd?
But all in vain: —— Retire we, charming Mourner;
If the black deſtin'd hour of Death be come;
Nor Pray'rs, nor Sorrow can reverſe its Doom:
And I have this one Comfort in my Fate,
I am not Guilty, but Unfortunate. *Exeunt.*

SCENE *the Caſtle.*

Enter two Officers.

1 *Officer.* The King indeed has Fury in his Temper,
Yet never have I ſeen him thus outragious.
But now he ſnatch'd a Jav'lin from his Guard,
And ſtabb'd it in the Boſom of his Neighbour;
Crying, his Father's Death muſt be reveng'd!
2 *Officer.* 'Tis ſtrange; —— The Croud interpret it to Madneſs:
Others, with ſubtle Malice, are induſtrious
To ſpread it round, A Judgment from the Gods:
But much I fear, it has a Helliſh Cauſe;
The Prieſt and his ſly Draught of Reconcilement,
I doubt, contain'd a killing Kindneſs in it.

1 *Officer.*

1 *Officer.* Heav'n best can tell; and best revenge the Treason.
But see, the Prince has pass'd the Antichamber;
With our High-Priest; and bend their Steps this way:
They seem engag'd in some Discourse of Moment,
We must not break upon their private Walks. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Mirvan, *and High Priest.*

Mirv. Fear not th' Event; but grant a short delay
To the firm Strength, and Vigour of his Youth;
That pushes to expel its abler Foe,
And guard a while the Citadel of Life;
But cannot long maintain th' unequal Combat.
You should have waited on his latest Pangs
With wishing Patience, and dissembled Sorrow.

H. Priest. I durst not longer trust my feeble Soul
To see his Racks, Distortions, wringing Pains;
And hear his Groans, so exquisite and piercing,
They'd almost force a sympathetick Sorrow
From things Inanimate: A longer Stay
Had sure betray'd me to a guilty trembling;
And wrought a foul Confession from my Tongue.
When the dire Object of his Pains invades
My Thoughts, I wish the Business were undone.

Mirv. By Heav'n, 'tis an Impeachment to your Wisdom,
To let the Wish of one relenting Moment
Fight with the Motions of your nobler Vengeance.
But if so dire an Object has impress'd
A firm, repenting Pity on your Mind;
Then I have done:——Go, expiate your Offence;
Confess, some cogent Demon push'd you on;
Or, that the Furies made you do that Deed,
At which your tame reflecting Spirits shrink,
And stung with Horror make your Life a Burthen.
This will dissolve the tender-hearted Croud;
And lull their Rage to soft and melting Sorrow.

H. Priest. Mistake not, Sir;——But see, the Presence opens;
Let us retire; I would not tempt my Courage
With a fresh View of what so strongly mov'd me.

Exeunt.

The SCENE *opening discovers the King held by his Attendants.*

King. Where are my Friends?——Be quick;——Pour Rivers on me,

Quench

Quench my scorch'd Entrails; see, I'm all on fire;
A flaming Brand has sing'd my Vitals; ha!
I blaze, I blaze;——*Jove* thunder me to Hell,
Or I shall set your airy Poles on fire.

1 *Officer.* See, now he shivers with Extreams of Cold.

King. Begone, malicious Hags!—— Speak to 'em, *Memnon*;
The curs'd Strumpets here have brought their Sieve,
And dribble th' Icy Waters o'er my Bowels.
Ha! Who's that grins? —— What *Mirvan*! do'st thou laugh
To see me thus abus'd? Come hither, Sister;
Thou shalt not have the Traytor.

2 *Officer.* His Words are wild, and starting as his Eyes;
He grasps me hard, and trembles as there were
An Earthquake in his Bosom.

King. —— What, my Father!
Let me go nearer; he would whisper to me:
What say'st, old Boy? —— The Business shall be done:-----
March out our Legions there; go, drain my Treasure;
We'll hire us forty thousand *Parthian* Archers.
No matter, let the Country lie untill'd;
I will have ev'ry Peasant press'd to th' War:
Oh!—— I am wounded: Lead me to my Tent.
Nay, pluck not out the Shaft; for if you do
My Soul will follow —— But the gushing Flood
Runs fast, and I grow weak with loss of Blood.

[*They lead him out.*

The End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SCENE *the Prison.*

Oxartes, Cleander, *and Guards.*

Oxart. *Cleander*, best dismiss your Fellow-Guards
To make all sure:----But let the Prince be told
Lord *Mirvan*'s Will.——

Clean.

Clean. ——You know this Signet, Friends;
With it I've Orders to diſcharge you hence,
To join the Centry on the Caſtle Duty;
I muſt attend the Prince's lateſt Hour.
Farewell t' you all: But Captain, let him know
This Rev'rend Man is from his Brother ſent;
To beg he would in Death all Wrongs forget. [*Exeunt Guards.*
The Noon of Night is paſt; and I have Work
Will take up all my Time; ſo muſt not ſtay
To be a Witneſs of your op'ning Friendſhip.
Make not delays. [*Exit* Cleander.

Oxart. ——The Gods for ever love you!

Enter Capt. *as diſcourſing with* Artaban, *then Exit.*
Ameſtris *follows weeping.*

Artab. I thank him, Sir; ——My Boſom is at reſt,
And ev'ry Thought of Injuries corrected:
May the good Gods as freely ſeal his Pardon,
As *Artaban* does from his Soul forgive him.

Oxart. Off, off, Diſguiſe;-----Throw thy dark Mantle by;
And ſhoot like Day, on his amazed Eyes.

Artab. Propitious Heav'n, what Prodigies are theſe?
O all you Gods, It muſt be ſure *Oxartes*,
In Kindneſs come to ſee his dying Friend:
Give me my All, and cloſe my wounded Breaſt;
That, aking, yawn'd to be ſupplied by thee,
And found a Loſs of half its vital Pow'rs.

Oxart. To be your humbleſt, ever faithful Slave, [*Kneeling.*
Is all the Fame *Oxartes* would deſire
To bleſs his Life, and crown his Death with Honour.

Artab. Riſe, my beſt Friend; Death only muſt divide us,
A thouſand Queſtions croud for Utterance,
All choak the Paſſage, and would all be firſt.
What Deity preſerv'd you in the War?
I ſaw you fall oppreſs'd, and thought you dead.
Where got you this Diſguiſe? And why? and how,
Prevail'd for Entrance?----Say, and give me Eaſe.

Oxart. Time is too precious, and advanc'd too far
To waſte it in Enquiries. Royal Sir,
O ſpare this Prodigality of Kindneſs;
Leſt I be loſt in your Exceſs of Love,
And ſo forget, I come to ſet you free.

Artab. Ye Pow'rs, what new Viciſſitude of Fate
Has your Eternal Juſtice yet in ſtore?

Ameſt. Inſtruct me, Heav'n! how ſhall my grateful Soul
Beſt thank, or beſt applaud the brave *Oxartes*?

Oxart. 'Tis not my Praiſe, but Joy, moſt Honour'd Miſtreſs;
For Man but treads his Fate-directed Rounds,
And all he does is from above deriv'd.
Think, there are Guardian Pow'rs that always wake
To ſave the Good; for Virtue props their Heav'n:
And I'm the happy executing Choice,
To Miniſter to their unſeen Decrees;
Which, as their Subſtitute, I thus begin.
Accept this Sword, and if we are oppos'd,
Then let us fight for Conqueſt and for Freedom.

Artab. Gods! How Amazement ſwallows up my Senſes,
And in th' Impetuous Whirl of circling Fate
Drinks down my Reaſon!——

Oxart. —— Haſte, my gracious Lord;
The Maſter Jaylor, good *Cleander's* ours;
Aſſiſts our Flight in Perſon, and directs
A ſecret Path: Not far from hence, there ſtands
Prepar'd a Chariot for my Royal Miſtreſs;
And on the Hills, impatient of your Preſence,
Six hundred valiant Men, *Armenians* all,
The willing Partners of your Captive Fortune,
Who fought indeed, but could not conquer for you,
(For Deſtiny o'erpower'd their Mortal Force;)
Wait, eager to conduct you to a Throne.

Artab. O my *Ameſtris*, ſhall I once again
Bear thee to Joys, to Royalty, and Love?
But we delay;——My brave Deliv'rer lead,
We will with diſtant Admiration tread;
And in your Mien divine Refulgence read.
So when *Æneas* ſought the golden Bough,
With Contemplation ſick, his Gate was ſlow;
When ſtrait his Mother's ſacred Doves appear'd,
And o'er his Head their airy Voyage ſteer'd:
Then with Security and Joy he trod,
And trac'd the Footſteps of the Leading God. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to the Caſtle-Yard.*

Enter Memnon *and Servant.*

Memn. Get me my Horſe;——The Morning riſes ſlow;
And all thoſe ruddy Streaks, that us'd to paint

The

The Day's Approach, are loſt in Clouds; as if
The Horrors of the Night had ſent 'em back
To warn the Sun, he ſhould not leave the Sea:
Or peep on Objects would prophane his Brightneſs.
I muſt be gone; my Danger chides me hence:
Where Kings are murther'd, who can hope for Safety?
Poor Prince! thy Mem'ry and thy Subjects Love
Are with Thee dead; and all Applauſe is *Mirvan's*.

Re-enter Servant.

Serv. Your Servants wait your Pleaſure; ——

Memn. ——'Tis enough: [*Shouts within.*
Hark, how the Clam'rous Rebels rend the Sky;
For ſhame ye Pow'rs, give o'er your Providence,
And let this little Globe of Earth become
A Play-thing to be toſs'd about by Fortune.
Chance may connive at Villains, Murther'd Kings,
And Uſurpation, yet be well excus'd;
Becauſe it wants the Thunder to revenge:
But Heav'n that has the Power to redreſs,
In an extream of Mercy blaſts its Juſtice.
Farewel, ungrateful City! I no more
Will enter theſe your Walls, till I'm aſſur'd
A better Choice adorns the Throne of *Perſia*. [*Ex* Memnon.

A Flouriſh of Trumpets, after which Enter Mirvan, *as King, attended: People Shouting.*

Mirv. Enough, my Friends, of this tumultuous Joy;
It jarrs againſt the Ear, and gives Offence.
The Nation's Ferment, and the publick Cauſe
Of freſh Afflictions, might have well excus'd
This loud Officious Love. —— No more, I pray;
But leave me, Sirs. Time and my Reign will beſt
Determine how I may deſerve your Thanks.
Piſaſtris. [*Exeunt People.*

Offic. ----Sir;

Mirv. ----I muſt employ you: —— Cold
Deliberate Heads hatch Dangers in their Hearts.
Old *Memnon*, and th' Inquiring Factious Peers
Seem not to reliſh Me, as I would have 'em;
But chew upon their Monarch's ſudden Death,
As if it ſmelt of ſomething more than Fate.
I've ſent a Summons to 'em, and thereby
Will ſound their Inclinations. Draw up all
Your Men, and plant 'em round the Caſtle Walls,
Let others be diſpers'd to guard the City,
And cruſh each riſing Tumult.----

Offic. ----We obey. [*Exeunt Officers.*

Manet

Manet Mirvan.

Mirv. This droaning Prieſt does Murther ſure in State;
With lazy Pomp, and deep-deſigning Slowneſs,
T' inhance the Merit of the Fact with Doubts
And anxious Expectation.---Or perhaps
Some envious Chance has balk'd his fair Intent;
And interpos'd betwixt our hop'd Revenge.
Or, if the Villain ſhould have plaid me falſe;
O Jealouſie, thou Demon of the Brain,
Haunt not my Breaſt with thy miſ-ſhapen Anguiſh!
He hopes for Favour and Reward from Me;
And what Enticements, to betray that Truſt,
Can iſſue from a Slave's dejected State?
Whom the next Hour diſrobes of Gorgeous Life;
And cruſhes th' unperforming Promiſer!

Enter Barzanes *haſtily.*

Barz. My Royal Lord——

Mirv. ——O welcome, good *Barzanes*;
How fares our Int'reſt? ſpeak;——

Barz. ——The Prieſt o' th' Sun
Stands in the Circ, hemm'd in by gath'ring Crouds;
Who, as he bawls his Rhet'rick in your Service,
Catch at the dying Accents of his Voice;
And eccho back the Sound with juſt Applauſe.

Mirv. But what ſaid *Memnon* to our haſty Summons?

Barz. I came, and found his Doors beſieg'd with Herds
Of Mules and Servants; laden, and prepar'd,
As 'twere for Journey to remoter Parts.
And as I preſs'd amidſt the buſie Throng,
He with a num'rous Equipage came forth;
He ſtarted, when he ſaw me; ſeem'd ſurpriz'd,
And faulter'd at my Meſſage; bad me ſay,
That Age and Sorrow had oppreſs'd his Judgment,
And render'd him unfit for nicer Counſels:
This ſaid, he mounted, and away they rode.

Mirv. Let the old Dotard go;——But on, and ſay,
What Did import your Haſte.

Barz. ——By Heav'n, it is
A Story of that fatal Conſequence,
I fear to give it Words: Let me be dumb,
And drown the Sorrows of my Tale in Silence.

Mirv. What After-game of Miſchief is on foot,
To blaſt the Pleaſures of my Infant Reign?
While jealous Fancy's buſie with my Thoughts,
To ſwell this unknown Ill to Giant Greatneſs:

Speak;

Speak, in the Name of Horror, all thy Tydings;
Tho' they have force to freeze my youthful Blood,
And turn me to a Statue with Confuſion!
Barz. That helliſh Prieſt, whom you but now employ'd,
Work'd into Truſt ſoon ſlipt his Serpent's Skin;
And under his Exterior Sanctity
Was falſe *Oxartes* hid.
Mirv. ——*Oxartes!* Ha!——
Furies, and Hell reward the ſubtle Fiend.
Barz. Oh, this is nothing to the Blow that follows;
You are betray'd too by *Cleander*; He,
Brib'd by *Oxartes*, hath releas'd the Slaves.
The Dungeons all are deſtitute and empty,
And they this Night with *Artaban* are fled.
Mirv. The Slaves releas'd! My Rival too eſcap'd!
A clammy Sweat comes o'er me:----O my Tortures!----
Millions of Plagues o'er-take 'em in their Flight.
Aſſiſt, ye wrathful Pow'rs; let poſting Deaths
Ride on the fickly Air, and make it breathe
Cramps, Pains, Sores, Poiſons, ev'ry Name that bears
Antipathy to Life, or Health, or Eaſe!——
Barz. Have Patience, Sir, to ſtem this Tide of Fate;
And ſummon all your Spirits to your Aid.
I have a Word of Horror yet remains,
Will paſs thro' all the Inlets of your Breaſt;
And ruſh, like molten Lead, upon your Heart.
The Princeſs——
Mirv. ——What of Her?
Barz. ——Is with Them fled.
Mirv. The Princeſs fled! O *Mirvan*! Fool! What Seas
Of Blood haſt thou been diving thro', to ſee
The rich ſought Coral ſnatch'd by other Hands!
Empire alone's an empty, barren Rock,
When Ornamental Beauty's torn away.
Deceitful Fortune! Ever-changing Strumpet,
Curſe on thy Gifts; henceforward I diſclaim
Thy treach'rous Bounty, and will fix my Hopes
On my own Sphere: Nor is it yet too late:
Quick, ſee it done.——
Barz. What done, my Lord?
Mirv ——Unneceſſary Slave!
I will have Vengeance ſhall make Nature ſhake,
And tremble at my Fury.——Draw out all
My Veteran Troops, and ſtrait purſue the Traitors:
Nor let one Slave, on Pain of Death, eſcape,

But hew 'em into Atoms: Only ſpare
Ameſtris' Life, and guard it as your own.
She yet may ſee her Folly, and be kind;
If not, I'll drag her trembling to my Arms;
And Pleaſures heighten'd in her Anguiſh prove:
Then ſtab Her, glowing with unwilling Love.

[*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE *changes to a Plain, with a diſtant Proſpect of the City.*

Enter Artaban, Ameſtris, Memnon, Oxartes *richly habited*, Cleander, *Soldiers, and Attendants.*

Artab. This fair Alliance pleaſes me ſo well,
It only gives me room to wiſh, it had
Sprung from a leſs deteſted Cauſe than Murther.
For tho' the King of *Perſia* were my Foe,
And to have kill'd him bravely in the Field
Had been a Cauſe for Triumph: Yet to think
Him baſely murther'd, cancels Enmity,
Turns all the Streams of Hate, and makes 'em flow
In Pity's Channels.

Ameſt. ——Sure ſuch Acts as theſe,
Were Hell yet uncreate, would force the Gods
In Self-defence to quaſh bold impious Man:
Or now begin to muſe on Realms of Torture!——

Memn. Impartial *Jove*, that lords it o'er the World,
Will in his Time revenge a Monarch's Blood.

Artab. Oh! my *Ameſtris*, how the pearly Dew
That trickles down your Cheeks, falls heavy here!
But to forbid it for a Brother's Death,
Would do a wrong to Piety and Cuſtom,
Tears are the Call of Nature.——

Oxart. ——Royal Sir,
Our common Safety points another Hour,
More ſuitable, for Ceremonial Sorrow:
We ſcarce are diſtant yet a ſlow Hour's March,
And may from hence o'er-look the City's Spires;
Who dares aſſure us, but th' Uſurper *Mirvan*
Alarm'd upon our Flight, and taught by Fear,
To make his guilty Title more ſecure,
May ſend his Forces out in ſtrict Purſuit,
And take us unprepar'd?

Memn.

Memn. ——'Tis true, my Lord,
His Guilt may prove pernicious to us all.
Artab. Therefore let's fence againſt the Tyrant's Rage
Pitch down your Tents awhile; I hold it beſt,
That you and I, Lord *Memnon*, with a Party
Ride round the Country; and proclaim to all
Our Purpoſe to revenge the poiſon'd King:
This will inhance the Juſtice of our Cauſe,
And may augment our Numbers.——
Ameſt. —— O my Lord,
Muſt I be left ſo ſoon? Bear Witneſs, Heav'n,
What dreadful Apprehenſions ſcare my Soul;
A chilly Fear runs ſhudd'ring thro' my Veins;
And tells my Heart, I ne'er ſhall ſee you more.
Artab. O think me not unkind, nor cheriſh Doubts;
Not half the Space that meaſures out a Day,
Will I be baniſh'd from your matchleſs Arms.
Nor would I leave thee on a trivial Cauſe,
But this has on the Shape of publick Moment,
'Tis the Concern of all!——To thee, *Oxartes*,
I here bequeath all that my Heart holds Dear;
Thou haſt a Soul may cheer her Widow'd Virtue,
And make the Hours of my unwilling Abſence
Fly on uncounted.
Ameſt. ——All the Gods protect you,
And bring you back in Safety to *Ameſtris*.
Artab. Doubt not, my Princeſs; nay, forbear theſe Tears;
They make the Pangs of my Departures long;
And clog Farewel for ever on my Tongue.
But oh! Farewel, my Love;——She's gone, my Lord;
And we, like lonely Travellers, muſt ſtray;
Robb'd of the friendly Sun's all-chearing Ray,
Loſt in the Gloom, and longing for the Day.

[*Exeunt*, Ameſtris *led by* Oxart. *at one Door*, Artaban. *and* Memn. *at another.*

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V. SCENE I.

SCENE *continues, the Plain, &c.*

Enter Oxartes *with his Sword drawn, follow'd by* Memnon.

Oxart. O! Had I bravely dy'd in her Defence,
I'd paid a Debt to Duty and to Glory;
But to ſurvive, and have Her born away,
In Spite of all I could, or dar'd to do;
It ſtabs my Virtue with a Breach of Truſt:
Villain and Coward! —— Gods! It is too much;
And nought remains to juſtify my Fame,
But thus to turn my Sword againſt my ſelf.
Memn. Forbear, raſh Man; ſubmit you to the Gods;
What Heav'n decrees,
With vain Effort, we ſtruggle to ſubvert.
Acquitted to the World, you're ſelf-condemn'd;
Becauſe your Valour met not that Succeſs
It well deſerv'd: —— How does the Prince reſent
This Blow of Fortune?
Oxart. —— Oh he raves, my Lord;
His Paſſion makes him rage, as wildly fierce,
As the ſcorch'd Tempeſt-beaten Sands of *Africk*.
Sometimes in an Extream of ſilent Sorrow,
He mourning droops, regardleſs of his Friends:
Talk of his Empire, and he ſighs, and cries,
No, let the Man that dares poſſeſs it, have it;
For I have done with Glory. ——
Memn. —— Let's to his Tent,
And rouſe him up to Fame; work his Fond Soul
T' attempt her Reſcue, or to fall with Honour. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to* Artaban's *Tent, diſcovers him lying on the Ground.*

Art. Let None preſume on Birth, or Fortune's Smiles,
Nor fix his Happineſs in being Great:
Re-enter Oxartes *and* Memnon.
Learn all from Me, that Grandeur has its Plagues;
And Death's the firſt, beſt Refuge from Afflictions. The

The Fate of Man's a Labyrinth of Chances,
Thro' which he drags his weary wand'ring Feet,
And thinks at ev'ry Turn he's diſengag'd:
Still in the winding Crookedneſs involv'd,
And ſtill perplex'd with Folds of endleſs Error!——
Ha! what art Thou?—— [Oxartes *comes forward.*
Haſte in thy Steps, and Fury in thy Eyes!
Avant!——I will not hear of Battel more.——

Memn. Exert your Soul, my Lord; Shake off this Sadneſs:
Forbid it Heav'n, that we ſhould let your Honour
Thus wither in its Bloom:——Now, by the Sun,
I wept to ſee your Soldiers hang their Heads,
As if their Prince's Sorrow were contagious.

Artab. O *Memnon Memnon!* think not I have lain
On Beds of Roſes here: Not all the Plagues,
The Tortures, Man can ſuffer in his Body,
Afflict with half the Pains that I have bore.
O! what is our Ambition's Spring but Love!
Or, what the Source and Cheriſher of Honour,
But Love!——For This, the Soldier prizes Danger;
And ſmiles with Pleaſure on his Toils and Wounds:
To throw his Lawrels in his Miſtreſs' Lap,
And entertain her with his grateful Labours!
O, my *Ameſtris!*——

Oxart. Heave again, my Lord;
And let the riſing Tempeſt of your Sighs
Ruſh ſtrongly, and unhinge this galling Anguiſh.
Think of the poor *Ameſtris*; what muſt She
Endure? O let me be for ever dumb,
Rather than vent the Image of my Doubts,
Too horrid for Expreſſion.——

Artab. ——Thou haſt rais'd
A Whirlwind in my Breaſt:----Conflicting Rage
Diſtends each Sinew; and remans my Soul.
Speak to my Fury, ſpeak it all, *Oxartes*;
And give not dire Imagination room,
For ought beyond it hideous.

Oxart. What will the Tyrant *Mirvan* leave undone,
To cure the raging Feaver in his Mind?
Suppoſe Him burning with his Lawleſs Love;
The Princeſs, urging all the Ties of Honour
And Duties of a Wife.----Then think his Hate,
And fruſtrated Revenge in your Eſcape:
What more can pleaſe his diſappointed Envy,
Than to compleat it on her Innocence?

Artab. O, for Protection from that frightful Thought!
Shall She be made the Spoil of brutal Luſt,
And I not ſtir an Arm in her Defence?
O let it not be ſaid, *Oxartes*, *Memnon*,
It is *Ameſtris'* Cauſe; and Heav'n it ſelf
Muſt ſuccour us againſt th' Invading Tyrant.
Juſtice no longer will his Inſults bear,
But brandiſhes her executing Spear;
She draws our Swords, and wings us to the Fight,
Her Wrongs t' avenge, and vindicate her Right. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to the Caſtle.*

Enter Mirvan.

Mirv. Once more is Fate come back; the ſtubborn Dame
Is in my Hands; and ſhall ſubmit, or Die.
I will have Love, to recompence my Pangs;
Nor ſhall the cold Excuſe of Wife, or Virtue,
Have Pow'r to dull, or diſappoint my Ardour;
No, coy *Ameſtris*; I have fawn'd too long;
'Tis time I now command; and uſe my Pow'r.

Enter Barzanes *haſtily.*

What ominous Fear ſpeaks thro' your haggard Eyes?

Barz. Our Watchmen from the Battlements, my Lord,
Tall Clouds of Duſt deſcry, that choak the Sight,
And drive apace their tow'ring Circles hither.
And ever and anon, amidſt the Smoak,
A Gleam of Brightneſs flaſhes on their Eyes.
Neighing of Steeds is heard, and a hoarſe Din
of claſhing Armour; but the Sound encreaſes,
And ev'ry Moment brays with louder Terror.

Mirv. With ſpeed go learn their further Obſervations;
But charge 'em on their Lives, they do not noiſe
This Fright amongſt the madding Populace. *Ex.* Barzanes.
Theſe *Perſians* are as Mutinous as Air;
That forms its Tumults from each factious Vapour
Of cold or hot Complexion.——
If *Artaban*'s hot Courage ſhould attempt
The Princeſs' Reſcue, ſo ſuperior to him
Our Numbers are, of ſo much firmer Strength;
'Tis but for him to periſh in th' Aſſault;
And render my Revenge yet more Compleat.

Re-enter Barzanes *with his Sword drawn.*

Barz. All's on the Rout, my Lord; Prince *Artaban*,
With *Memnon*, is at Hand; Auxiliar Troops. Crowd

Croud up his Rear, and foyl our best Defence.
The faithless *Persians*, throwing down their Arms,
Traffick for Life; and sell their Sworn Allegiance
For shameful Quarter:——
Mirv. Villain, get thee down [*Stabs him.*
To Hell; and tell 'em that the Fray's begun;
And we will send such Shoals of murther'd Slaves,
Shall glut their empty Regions.
Barz. ——O! I dye;
Ungrateful! but I see Fate lye before me,
And view thee grappling in the Snare.—— [*Dies.*
Mirv. ——Thou ly'st,
False Prophet! but the Storm comes on apace,
And will prevent my Purpose. [*Goes in.*

Enter Oxartes *with a Party driving in the High-Priest Wounded.*

H. Priest. Spare my Life;
And do not violate this hallow'd Robe.
Oxart. By all the Sanctity belongs to Priesthood,
No Privilege of Garb shall skreen a Villain!
Tho' all thy Mystick Trumpery, thy Heaps
Of Houshold-Gods were wrap'd within thy Gown;
Nought should protect Thee from this Stroke of Justice.
H. Priest. Revenge me, Gods!—— [*Dies.*
Oxart. ——Go make a fair Appeal
To *Æacus*, to *Minos*, *Rhadamanthus*;
And let those Potentates of nether Justice
See thee Reveng'd:——But be thy Crimes unknown;
Left Hell it self should fear more foul Disorder
From thee, the Breathing Trumpet of Sedition!
Sold. What Body's this lies weltring in its Blood?
Oxart. By Heav'n it is *Barzanes*, *Mirvan*'s Creature;
May all such Villains meet the Fate they merit:
But see; the Guards are muster'd to oppose us.
[Oxartes *and his Party fight off.*

SCENE *changes to a private Apartment.*

Enter Amestris *bloody, follow'd by* Mirvan *with a Dagger.*

Mirv. Why should you look on Pleasure with that Dread,
As to make Death a Refuge to avoid it?
The Purple Flood runs trickling down your Robe,——
And had not I the greedy Weapon seiz'd,
It soon had found a Passage to your Heart.

Ameſt. Then Heav'n had been moſt merciful and juſt;
And I with Joy had bleſt its Providence;
And ſhrunk into the leaden Arms of Death,
Secure from thee, and ſuch deteſted Villains.
Mirv. Think if I am a Villain; Traitreſs, think
'Twas baleful Influence of ſucceſsleſs Love
That blaſted firſt my Virtue. Then reflect
And curſe thoſe beauteous, but malignant, Eyes:
Whoſe guilty Fires inflam'd my glowing Breaſt,
And then deny'd to cure the Wounds they made.
[*An Alarm within.*
But hark! they come, Enchantreſs.——
Ameſt. ——O what mean you?
Mirv. To quaff the luſcious ſparkling Nectar off,
And leave the Dregs for Him.---Come, ſpare my Labour;
Comply a little, and I will allow
Some Struggles to your wiſhing Modeſty;
I know that Women will not wholly yield;
But muſt be gently forc'd to what they wiſh:
Nay, be not Obſtinate.——
Ameſt. ——Oh! kill me rather;
But ſpare my Virtue; hear me, Chaſte *Diana:*
Hear, Virgin Deity; ſupport my Weakneſs,
And ſave me from Diſhonour.——
Oxart. [*Within.*] Submit, and yield the Paſſage, or you Dye.
Guards. our Faith is more than Life.
Ameſt. ——O help, ye Gods!
Mirv. He ſhall not yet poſſeſs thee.
[Oxart. *breaks in at* Mirv. *goes to kill her;* Mirv. *is joyn'd by Guards; they Fight;* Oxart. *bears off* Ameſt.
Oxart. Traytor, hold
Thy curſed Hand.
Mirv. Have at thee, perjur'd Fiend. [*Fight off.*
Re-enter Mirvan *wounded.*
Perdition catch 'em! Am I left alone?
As if they watch'd this Turn of froward Fortune,
And waited but to ſail before the Wind.
Enter Cleander.
Clean. Ha! art thou found?
Mirv. ——Whom doſt thou threaten, Hellhound?
Think'ſt thou that *Mirvan* is a Match for thee?
Clean. Th' Injuſtice of thy Cauſe has levell'd *Mirvan*
Beneath our meaneſt Champions.
Mirv. ——Thou haſt found
That *Mirvan* yet can conquer to thy Coſt.
[*Fight and* Cleander *falls.*

As

As Mirvan *is going,* *Enter* Artaban.

Art. Come back, Uſurper; here, and meet thy Fate;
This Sword muſt end Thee; tho' it is my Curſe
To ſtain it with that guilty Blood of thine:
But Juſtice, and that Heav'n which thou haſt wrong'd
With Uſurpation, Rapes, and ſavage Murthers,
Exact it, to atone their injur'd Pow'rs.

Mirv. Fond and inſulting! Flatter not thy ſelf
With fancy'd Triumphs over me, who am
Born to controul and awe thy weaker Fate,
Behold the utmoſt Limits of thy Life;
But I could curſe thoſe unperforming Gods,
That made me fierce, and willing to deſtroy,
Yet gave me not the Pow'r of Baſilisks,
To murther with a Look.----I would diſdain
To lift my Arm; and blaſt Thee with my Eyes.

Art. The Gods that know the Malice of a Fiend,
Hold in his Pow'r, ſubſervient to their Will;
Elſe, abſolute in his malignant Frenzy,
The Demon would depopulate the World:
Such is thy Rage, and ſo art thou reſtrain'd.
But, Tyrant, purple Villain! where's my Wife?

Mirv. I would be ſilent, but that I have Words
Fell as the Hate I bear Thee: Sounds, as fatal
As Arrows dipt in the *Nonacrian* Lake,
To pierce and poiſon thy enamour'd Soul.
Thy Wife is dead.

Art. —— It cannot, muſt not be!
If there be Gods, it is impoſſible!
And thou the blackeſt, execrable Fiend,
Haſt made this Fiction to torment my Soul.

Mirv. Let it be ſo: But had you heard her Cries,
Her piercing Shrieks, in Intervals of Joy,
When I with Fury ſeiz'd my trembling Prey,
And grown Immortal in Exceſs of Pleaſure
Revell'd amidſt her Charms —— Indeed ſhe wept,
And ſobb'd, and ſigh'd, ſo hideous and profound,
With ſo much Bitterneſs of rueful Sorrow;
That I in Pity drew my Poniard out,
And ended all her Troubles.

Art. —— Do I Dream?
Or am I waken'd from the frightful Slumber
And finding it is true, congeal with Horror?
But I will tear this ſtupid Madneſs out;
Gods! did you hear with how much Inſolence
He loudly dares your Juſtice, yet are calm?
But I delay too long. ——

Mirv.

Mirv. —— Yet be adviſ'd,
And urge not thus your Fortune; I'm appeas'd,
And would not kill thee. What thy Fate would be,
Expect in Him.

Art. —— The poor *Cleander* ſlain?
O common Ravager! each Moment's pauſe
Produces freſh Examples of thy Guilt;
And haſtens my Revenge. [*Fight*, Mirv. *falls.*

Mirv. Hell, I am fal'n.
O ſpare that Stab of Malice; 'tis enough:
I feel the griſly Monſter drag me hard;
And now I'm hurry'd to his gloomy Den. [*Dies.*

Art. He Dies,----and I, the Victor, ſtrait muſt follow.
Perhaps, the poor *Ameſtris* thinks me ſlow;
She, wafted into Bliſs, with Pain beholds
Me ſhiv'ring on the Shore; and waits my coming.
Thou well acquainted Steel, be faithful to me,
And do the laſt, beſt Office for thy Maſter!

[*Going to fall on his Sword.* Oxartes *breaks in and prevents him*; Ameſtris, Memnon *and Soldiers.*

Oxart. All-gracious Heav'n forbid this dire Event.

Art. Whoe'er thou art, thou haſt prevented Death:
Oxartes! and *Ameſtris!* Sure I have
Already paſt the Stream, or all is Riddles.
She only can reſolve 'em. [*Embracing her.*

Ameſt. —— Oh my Joy
Swells high above Expreſſion!

Art. —— Doſt thou live?
Then thou art pure, unſtain'd, and ſtill *Ameſtris*;
And all the Villain ſpoke, was fictious Horror
Old *Memnon* too! I am beſet with Friends,
Each with a ſmiling Sympathy of Welcome.

Memn. I on my Knees congratulate, and ſee
The Hand of Heav'n in unexpected Changes.
United *Perſia*'s Eyes are turn'd on you,
The kindly Balm to heal their gaping Wounds,
And ſet up broken Juſtice on its Baſis.

Oxart. Broken indeed. But ſee the trait'rous Cauſe,
That ſhock'd its Fabrick, puniſh'd in his Crime.

Hence let each bold aſpiring Man beware,
Leſt Heav'n arreſt his Paſſion's fierce Career;
For Vice ſhall but a ſhort-liv'd Triumph make,
E're Jove's *unerring Wrath its Guilt o'er-take;*
And the licentious Pomp to Atoms ſhake. [Exeunt omnes.

EPI-

EPILOGUE.

CURSE on the Cuſtom, that demands your Stay
For Epilogue, *when tir'd with damn'd dull Play!*
Us, and your ſelves from this hard Taſk releaſe;
And let the grating Impoſition ceaſe.
Lord! on what Thorns you ſit, and ſeem ſo nettled,
Becauſe kind Madam yields, and Bargain's ſettled.
For Heav'ns Sake, been't thus eager for the Lure,
You may too ſoon repent the hot Amour.
Better be teiz'd with ten dull Poetaſters,
Than ſingle Recipe——*for Love's Diſaſters!*
One hearty Curſe, and Epilogue's *forgot:*
But when that other Malady's your Lot,
You will not only Curſe, but——curſe, and rot.
Well, take your Fates; when'er ſuch Paſſions warm ye,
We Players, like Prieſts, may chide, but ne'er reform ye.
Bewitching Sin has Charms, I know, muſt laſt,
'Till Age, in ſpite of Frailty, make you Chaſte:
Unleſs Repentance of ſome dear-bought Pleaſure
Effect at once, what Age would do at Leiſure.

FINIS.